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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE 0551
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE 8383
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2016

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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN REITERATES CALL FOR STRATEGIC RESTRAINT
REGIME IN SOUTH ASIA

Classified By: Derived from DCSG 05-01, d.

¶1. (U) In an April 5 address at Columbia University, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz reiterated Pakistan's call for a "package deal" on civil nuclear cooperation involving both India and Pakistan and noted that Pakistan had sought a "strategic restraint regime" to prevent an arms race and stabilize the strategic postures of the two countries. When asked on April 8 about Secretary Rice's mention of non-proliferation in her Senate testimony, Foreign Office Spokesperson Tasneem Aslam noted "Pakistan has already made a proposal on a strategic restraint regime in South Asia. These things can be discussed in the context of our proposals."

¶2. (C) On April 10, MFA Director for Disarmament Khalid Mehmood briefed PolCouns on Pakistan's proposal for a strategic restraint regime (SRR). The proposal had its origins in Pakistani ideas that had been floated with the Indians in the 1990s, before the Indo-Pak dialogue stalled (in 1998). (Prior to the two countries' nuclear tests, he said, Pakistan had called for a nuclear free zone in South Asia, combined with a "no-war pact.") In 2004, Pakistan tabled a modified SRR proposal that included the following elements: (a) no operational deployment of nuclear-capable missiles, (b) keeping nuclear weapons on low alert status (i.e., warheads to be kept separate from delivery vehicles), (c) avoiding an arms race, and (d) no acquisition or deployment of destabilizing systems like anti-ballistic missile systems.

¶3. (C) According to Mehmood, the Indian side had rejected the proposal, saying that its security concerns transcended South Asia. Pakistan's view, he said, was that extra-regional considerations should not exclude the prospect of strategic restraint within the region, especially given that the preponderance of India's conventional forces appeared to be arrayed towards Pakistan. Pakistan remained concerned about the threat of an accidental or unauthorized nuclear incident, he added.

¶4. (C) Mehmood noted that although the SRR is not moving forward, Pakistan and India now have a pre-notification agreement on ballistic missile tests. Pakistan hoped to extend the agreement to cruise missile tests, he said,

explaining that cruise missiles could also carry nuclear payloads, but India had not responded favorably as yet. These discussions were ongoing in two experts groups under the Composite Dialogue, one dealing with conventional CBMs and the other with nuclear CBMs. The groups had met three times, most recently in August 2005, and were next scheduled to meet April 25-27, with the first two days devoted to nuclear CBMs and the last day to conventional.

15. (C) Asked why Aslam and Aziz were raising the SRR concept in the context of the debate over the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Initiative, Mehmood speculated that Pakistan hoped to underscore that it was a responsible nuclear power, and thus a candidate for a similar civil-nuclear deal.

16. (C) Comment: We suspect that much of the noise Pakistani officials are making regarding the U.S.-India civ-nuc deal is playing to a domestic audience. Raising the SRR at this time is probably not due to any calculation that Pakistan has a realistic prospect of participating in a "package" civ-nuc deal with India. It is more likely that with the eyes of the world (and Congress) on India, Pakistan senses that it has more leverage to prod India for a response to their SRR proposal. Pakistan may also have an eye on the April 25-26 Pak-India session on Nuclear CBMs.

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